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# Israel denies dragging feet in spying probe

## 'No espionage against U.S.' asserted

By Jonathan Broder  
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JERUSALEM—Israel strongly denied Sunday U.S. accusations that it has not cooperated fully in the investigation of the Jonathan Pollard espionage affair and it rejected reports that Israel has been operating a number of other spy operations in the United States.

"Israel reiterates that no espionage activities are conducted against the United States on its behalf," a Cabinet statement said. It was Israel's first formal comment on the subject since Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, pleaded guilty in Washington last Wednesday to charges of spying for Israel.

But the government and its spokesmen still refused to comment on or explain why four other Israelis, including a respected senior Israeli air force officer, Brig. Gen. Aviam Sella, were named as unindicted coconspirators in the Pollard case.

"The government of Israel is in close touch with the U.S. administration in order to bring about the clarification of the various topics that have come up recently," the Cabinet statement said.

It repeated Israel's stand that the Pollard affair represented an isolated, unauthorized act of espionage and that the unit that handled Pollard had been disbanded.

The government also reiterated its claims that Israel had cooperated with U.S. investigators who came here after Pollard was arrested last November. The Cabinet said Israel is "committed to the continuation of this cooperation, which is based on the relations of trust that prevail between the two countries."

"It is inconceivable that attempts to foul the atmosphere between [Israel and the United States] should succeed," said the statement, drawn up by Prime Minister Shimon Peres and endorsed by his government at the Cabinet's weekly meeting.

The statement said Israel is concerned over a spate of what it called "unfounded" U.S. press reports in which senior Justice Department officials, including FBI Director William Webster and other administration officials, are quoted as saying that Israel was not cooperating fully with the United States in the

ongoing investigation into the Pollard affair. The officials also were quoted as saying other suspected Israeli spy operations in the United States are being probed.

"The government of Israel views these reports with concern and hopes they will not continue," the Cabinet said.

The government's petulant tone underscored Jerusalem's growing discomfort with the U.S. Justice Department's continuing probe into Israeli spy activities in the United States and Israel's concern over damage to its image among the American public. In contrast, the White House and the State Department have sought to play down the spy affair in the interest of minimizing the strain in relations between Washington and Jerusalem.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking to a Tel Aviv audience over the weekend, charged there were certain circles in the U.S. that were "out to get Israel."

"I do not know what is motivating them, what is inspiring those in the American government who are out to get Israel, but recent events in the United States add up to something that should worry us," Rabin said.

The Cabinet's statement also decried recent moves by U.S. lawmen against Israelis and U.S. firms suspected of illegally selling American weapons to Iran.

Unidentified senior officials here were quoted Friday in the Israeli media as warning that Israel might respond to the Justice Department's accusations against Israel by disclosing details of alleged American espionage activities against Israel.

One high-ranking official who asked not to be identified said Israel had no intention of extraditing Rafael Eitan, the former head of the intelligence unit that handled Pollard, despite a request of the Justice Department. After the unit was disbanded, Eitan was appointed chairman of the board of Israel Chemicals, one of the government's most lucrative jobs.

Vice President George Bush, interviewed by the Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot, said the Pollard affair already has negatively affected U.S.-Israeli relations, adding that it is too early to determine how serious the damage is.

Meanwhile, the government's refusal to go beyond its claims of full cooperation with U.S. authorities over an unauthorized, one-time spy incident has aroused suspicions among middle-level officials and the Israeli media that the country's leaders may not be telling the whole truth.

This is particularly the case regarding the question of how Brig. Gen. Sella, now the commander of the U.S.-built Ramon air force base in the south of the country, could have been involved in what Peres has termed a "rogue" spy operation.

"All attempts to obtain an official response or information about the background of Aviam Sella, who is mentioned in Pollard's indictment, were met with stubborn silence," the Labor Party's Davar daily said Friday.

"The questions on the agenda remain as follows: Did the Israel Defense Forces or Israel air force senior command know about Sella's involvement in spying? Is the absence of knowledge and coordination a lesson requiring conclusions to be drawn and implemented?" the paper said.

The newspaper also ran an unprecedented expose of the lack of parliamentary control over the country's intelligence services. Davar diplomatic correspondent Yossi Melman said the only body looking into the conduct of the intelligence community was a toothless six-member subcommittee of parliament's Security Committee.

"Privately, committee members complain that they're being fed a mess of pottage," Melman wrote. "A few crumbs of information are thrown their way. . . . But the legislative branch has virtually no supervisory powers over Israel's intelligence operations."

In reality, Melman said, only the prime minister supervises Israel's intelligence community.